

## S.D. will shift to more renewable power

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**By Craig D. Rose**

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Add the city of San Diego to a growing list of entities setting targets for generating electricity from renewable sources and shifting away from fossil fuels.

At a news conference scheduled for today, Mayor Dick Murphy will be joined by council members Donna Frye and Michael Zucchet in announcing plans to increase the amount of renewably generated electricity in the city from 13 megawatts to 63 megawatts over the next decade.

The new cleanly generated power is expected to come from photovoltaic, or solar-based, systems on city buildings, from tapping landfill gases and from encouraging developers to install renewable power systems on their projects.

The San Diego plan follows passage last year of state legislation mandating that San Diego Gas & Electric and other investor-owned utilities derive 20 percent of their electricity from renewable sources by 2017.

Underscoring the momentum toward renewables, three key state agencies – the California Public Utilities Commission, the California Energy Commission and the California Power Authority – now say they hope to accelerate utility efforts and reach the 20 percent target by 2010.

San Francisco, the Los Angeles Community College District and the University of California have recently set targets for shifting to renewable sources for their power.

Murphy says the momentum to use clean, renewable power sources is driven by a sense of urgency resulting from the state's monumental electricity crisis, concerns about supplies of natural gas, and a growing awareness of environmental problems.

"The leaders in government recognize that global warming is a serious threat to the future of humankind, and each of us has to do our part to address what is a potential crisis to the Earth," he said.

The renewable target that Murphy, Frye and Zucchet are scheduled to announce today at the Miramar Operations Center includes electricity generated at city-owned facilities and within the private sector.

The effort is expected to include about 35 megawatts of solar-generated electricity and about 15 additional megawatts generated from landfill gases.

San Diego already taps renewable sources by generating electricity from solar systems on two city-owned buildings, as well as from landfill gas and a hydropower facility.

Murphy said reaching the new goal will probably require a \$10 million bond offering to finance solar

projects, along with incentives for private developers.

He added that he was encouraged by a program already in place that expedites private development projects including renewable energy components.

The renewable target program will go to a city Rules Committee vote Sept. 3 and could be approved by the entire council and established as city policy in the fall.

Frye said renewable energy projects now have such a multifaceted appeal that she expects approval by the council will be a "slam dunk."

"There's always been that argument that it's either jobs or the environment," said Frye. "But renewables are good for the environment and good for creating jobs."

The renewables also provide a degree of energy independence, she added, while cleaning the air.

SDG&E, meanwhile, says it should be deriving 7 percent of its electricity from renewable sources by next year, compared with 1 or 2 percent as recently as last year.

A spokesman for the utility, which is also scheduled to be represented at today's news conference, says it's supportive of the city's efforts to develop more renewable resources.

A recent study from Sacramento-based Environment California says the state's renewable portfolio standard – the 20 percent goal by 2017 – can help create thousands of jobs within the state.

J.P. Ross, a representative of the Greenpeace environmental group, noted that jobs for installing and maintaining renewable systems such as rooftop photovoltaics will inevitably be locally based, and that capturing the manufacturing end of the business could bring more jobs into the state.

"If the 10 biggest cities in California followed suit on the San Diego model, we could be looking at 394 megawatts of new renewables," said Ross, who co-authored studies supporting the city's new renewables target.

"That would bring about 3,000 new local jobs – and 10,000 total jobs if we can bring in manufacturing."

But Ross pointed out that California squandered an opportunity to retain leadership in the now-burgeoning production of wind turbines.

"The state made huge investments in wind in the 1980s and then California dropped the ball," said Ross. "Now there are multibillion-dollar wind markets operating out of Denmark and Germany."

Matt Freedman, a staff attorney for The Utility Reform Network, a consumer group that pressed for passage of the renewable portfolio standard, says he's encouraged by the commitment of the PUC in particular in pressing forward with renewables.

Freedman noted that the frequently divided five-member commission voted unanimously to establish financial penalties for utilities failing to meet the standard.

"Any program can be derailed, but I'm encouraged that we're on the right track," said Freedman.

V. John White, director of the Center for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Technologies, said recent events represent a marked shift.

"The 1990s were terrible for renewables," said White, who has advocated for clean energy since the 1970s. "This is the beginning of the renaissance we had hoped for."

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